ChequamegonChirps

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The July meeting of the Cheqamegon Bird Club will be at the Medford School Forest at 6:30 July 20. This will be a walkabout with a bring your own food for a picnic meal afterward. You're welcome to bring a dish to pass but it isn't required. The school forest is located on the south side of Highway 64 about a half-dozen miles east of Highway 13 just east of Highway C when it turns north. The session will be held-rain or shine-since a building and bathrooms are available.

Migration

With summer now in full bloom and crops growing gangbusters, migration doesn't seem to fit into the picture if you aren't a knowledgeable birder. Shorebirds are on the move now and have been for a few weeks already. They aren't in a rush as they meander southward. That's started while a species such as goldfinch is still a month or more before they will be nesting. One of the perplexing items of migration, is how do they get to where they want to go? What path or paths do they follow?

The following information comes from a recent article by Kristyn Ziehm in The Ozaukee Press printed in Port Washington that deals with peregrine falcons. Nest boxes put high up on power plant towers benefit peregrines and make it possible to closely follow the nesting through fledging process which includes banding all chicks. This year, ten chicks, three each hatched at Port Washington, Oak Creek and four at the Weston Plant on the south side of Wausau. With advanced technology now available, tracking them after they fledge will be much more complete. There has been the question of where do peregrines go for the first few years until they nest? Now devices are available that are about the size of a tip of a little finger. They are created on a 3D printer and include the tracker, small antenna and a tiny solar panel that powers it. The tracker is placed on a blue-and-black band on the chick's leg, with a dab of super gel to ensure it stays fastened. The solar panel will power the tracker indefinitely in real time. Location from the tracker is picked up on Motus stations, which typically track wildlife, Terra Listens devices and, perhaps most significantly, smartphones and tablets.

THREE PEREGRINE FALCON chicks born at the We Energies power plant in Port Washington this spring were tagged on May 27 with bands that for the first time include tracking devices designed to provide information about where the birds spend the first years of their lives. *Photo by Sam Arendt*

Trackers may solve falcon mystery

■ *Small devices installed on peregrine tags for the first time to provide information about where birds born at power plants including in Port spend* the first year of their lives

The Port power plant has been the birthplace of eighty-six chicks since 2000. This year the chicks were banded on May 27. The peregrines are typically banded when they are 18 to 23 days old and fledge about three weeks after banding. The trackers, which are individually made to order, cost about $300 each and the tracking program is $20 to $30 annually for each device. Greg Septon, who heads the program, plans to continue the program beyond this year.

It will take several years to get enough reliable information from which to draw conclusions. That's because 50% to 70% of a hatch dies within a year. If all goes well, Septon hopes to learn where peregrines go the first three years of their lives. He thinks they go to warm cities in the south but these bands will provide accurate and timely information. A bird banded in Port Washington in 2023 was found in Nicaragua a year later. Another bird hatched on the shores of Lake Superior was seen that winter in Austin Texas.

More migration and odd facts you might know—or not

Birds are one of the most successful the world has ever seen. They have survived for over 100 million years, singularly mastering the land water and sea. The live in almost every environment from harsh Antarctic expanses to barren deserts, from cities to remote seas. Archaeopteryx, dating back 150 million years is the first known bird. Although possessing reptilian features such as toothed jaws, a tail with vertebrae, and clawed fingers on its wings, it had feathers, a feature unique to birds.

During World War II, the U.S. used a pigeon corps of 54,000 birds for carrying messages. More than 3,000 soldiers, known as pigeoneers, trained and cared for them. The birds were parachuted from airplanes, released from subs, flew day or night and sometimes carried cameras to take reconnaissance photographs.

Four early versions of the Great Seal of the United States featured a rooster, a dove, a two headed eagle, and a phoenix in flames. Congress finally approved a sketch made by Charles Thompson on June 26, 1782.

In 1784, a month after Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart had completed his piano concerto no. 17 in G Major, K 453, he was startled to hear a section of it being whistled in a local shop—by a starling! Mozart visited the shop often and was known to whistle in public, perhaps explaining the incident. Whatever the reason, he bought the bird and kept it as a cherished pet.

Bird migration isn't simply about escaping the cold. Come fall, when other species are heading down the slopes of the Rockies and Sierras, the blue grouse is headed up. Conifer needles, which it feasts on throughout the winter is the lure.

Bird migration doesn't always involve flying. The great auk, now extinct, would swim from it's breeding sites around Newfoundland to as far south as Florida. Emperor penguins will walk 125 miles, and emus as much as 300 miles to find a mate.

It would take over 2,000 hummingbird eggs to equal just one ostrich egg. Hummingbird eggs are ½ inch long and weigh .02 oz. while the ostrich egg weighs 3 pounds and is 6 inches long. Although the ostrich egg is the world's largest, it is the smallest in comparison to the size of its mother.

These blurbs came from the book Bird Brain-Teasers which includes puzzles, games and avian trivia whose author is Patrick Merrell.

WISCONSIN PEREGRINE Recovery Project founder Greg Septon showed a tracking device applied to a band on a chick born at the We Energies power plant in Port. *Photo by Sam Arendt*

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Club contacts

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July and August events

Full Moons July 29 Buck moon

August 27 Sturgeon moon

Summer time with strong heat until?

Mosquitoes providing great bird feeding.

Peregrines are about the size and weight of a large crow, yet they can kill birds of a much larger size, such as this fat duck. In tribute to their ability as duck hunters, North American peregrines used to be known as "duck hawks."
STEVE KAUFMAN